

Sidekick Plus packs in features

Sidekick, the program that set the standard for memory resident — simultaneous, pop-up — programs on desk-top computers has just been outdone by a new version. It's called Sidekick Plus.

I have never seen so many features in one program. Sidekick Plus easily could be sold as three or four different programs.

The original Sidekick has been an invaluable tool for programmers and other serious computer users. Those folks should find the improvements in the new version a pleasure.

For those who use their PCs for more routine tasks, such as accounting and word processing, Sidekick Plus may be a bit of overkill. You may want to compare it to a leaner, easier-to-use program that performs many of the same tasks, such as Prodex, which I reviewed recently.

Although Sidekick Plus has some distinct disadvantages, its features are impressive:

- The appointment book and calendar now display up to four weeks

BUSINESS TOOLS



Hillel Segal

of scheduling. There's also an alarm clock — complete with a "snooze button" — that you can set to remind you of appointments. There's even a graphic display of schedules, so you easily can identify open blocks of time.

- You can cut text from one program and paste it into another, an adaptation of a feature commonly found only in word processing programs.

- The phonebook has a full search-and-sort option that even will dial the number for you if you're connected to a modem.

- You can download files to another computer while you work in another program, and a script option that lets you automate communications routines.

- The outliner, a new feature, al-

lows you to draft reports and lists, complete with notes, and then print them, too.

- Sidekick's file manager lets you tag files and manipulate them, and its note pad can handle nine open pages at the same time.

- The on-line calculator has been replaced in the new edition with a "tape" showing on the screen, which is easily edited.

This powerful program is not without some serious drawbacks, however.

First, it's complex, and you have to learn it thoroughly to take full advantage of its features, much like you would a good word processing program. The three volumes of documentation are voluminous: a 425-page user manual, a shorter manual for users of the original Sidekick, and a short reference manual. These are well-written, but, like the program, they can be a bit overwhelming.

Sidekick Plus also conflicts with other memory resident programs and features you may have installed on your PC. I've found that it

conflicts with Smartnotes and a mouse on an IBM PS/2 Model 50. There may be ways to circumvent these incompatibilities with additional effort, but I haven't discovered them yet.

Sidekick Plus is available from the publisher, Borland International, Scotts Valley, Calif., or from most local computer stores. The price is \$199.95, a bit hefty compared with other programs in its class, but a bargain when you consider the volume of features.

The bottom line: The more you use your computer, the more you may wish to consider this program, particularly if it could be shared among many users in your office. Other desk-top managers are simpler to use, but none are as powerful on a point-by-point comparison.

Hillel Segal's column has been broadened to include evaluations of gadgets, seminars and books designed to enhance business productivity. Segal is a management consultant based in Boulder.